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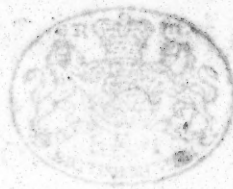
P R E A C H ' D at the
Affizes held at *W E L L S*,
A U G U S T the 27th, 1712.

By the Right Honourable the
Lord Chief Baron *Ward*,
And the Honourable
Mr. Baron *PRICE*.

By *JOHN POTTER*, M. A.
Vicar of *Cloford* in *Somersetshire*. *K*

Publish'd at the Request of the H I G H -
S H E R I F F and G R A N D - J U R Y .

L O N D O N, *Ⓟ*
Printed for HENRY CLEMENTS, at the *Half-*
Moon in *St. Paul's Church-Yard*, 1712.





T O

THOMAS HORNER, Esq;

High - Sheriff of the County of
S O M E R S E T;

And to the

Gentlemen of the *G R A N D - J U R Y*
of the said County.

Sir Will. Wyndham, Bar.

Sir Francis Wyndham, Bar.

Maurice Berkly, Esq;

John Codrington, Esq;

John Rolle, Esq;

Harry Bridges, Esq;

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John Britton, Esq;

Samuel Collins, Esq;

John Hody, Esq;

Gerrard Martin, Esq;

Matthew Baron, Esq;

Edward Whitchurch, Esq.

A *S plain, as this Discourse is, I am apt
sometimes to persuade myself, that it
will meet with a favourable Reception, since*

DEDICATION.

it is sent abroad, at the Command of so many worthy Gentlemen.

Had it gone no further, than the Pulpit, its Imperfections could have been charg'd upon no one, but the Author ; but since it is made public, by your Authority, it begs leave to shelter itself under your Patronage ; praying withall, that, of whatever Censure the unmerciful World may be pleas'd to bestow upon it, you would be content to take a share ; and not let the whole fall entirely and solely upon,

Your most Humble, and
most Obedient Servant,

J. Potter,



R O M. XII. 19.

Dearlly Beloved, avenge not your selves; but rather give place unto Wrath: For it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.

ACCORDING to our different Apprehension of Things, our Minds are mov'd with different Inclinations; only, when an Object is presented, as importing neither Good, nor Evil, then indeed we are no further concern'd, than to take a *transient* Notice of it: It smoothly slides thro' the Imagination, and scarce leaves an impression behind. But, when a Thing appears, as either Good, or Evil, presently the Soul is affected with suitable Passions; either a desire to embrace, and enjoy it; or an Aversion to keep off from, and avoid, it. That, which seems good and conducive to our Happiness, excites, in us, Love, Desire, and Joy: What is look'd upon as Evil and Pernicious, raises Hatred, Aversion, and Sadness: The apprehension of an ill Turn intended, is apt to stir up *Anger*: The Reflection upon an Injury actually done us, informs the Mind with the Spirit of *Revenge*, and strongly inclines us to give a Return.

The Truth is, *Man*, tho' made in the Image of God, is yet of a middle Nature between *Angels* and *Beasts*. In respect of his Rational Faculties, he is ally'd to the *Former*: But, considering him with regard to his Passions, he is as nearly related to the *Latter*.

Hence

Hence, perhaps, the *Poet* fancied, that *Prometheus*, in making Man, borrow'd Fire from Heaven to give him Life and Soul; and furnish'd out the Material Part with Ingredients and Affections, taken from other Creatures; particularly that he plac'd the *Heart*, and Fury of a *Lyon* in his Breast.

And indeed, there is something of *Reality*, as well as *Fancy* in this: For, in most Men, *Passion* is generally too hard for *Reason*. Resentment is conceiv'd upon every trifling occasion, and Anger breaks out upon any, even the most idle Pretence. *O that we had of his Flesh! We cannot be satisfied*, said they, in *Job*, (Chap. xxxi. Ver. 31.) as if nothing would pacify the Wrath of the Furious; nothing make an Atonement, but humane Blood and Sacrifice.

To govern this Passion of Anger, and reduce it to the Use, and Service, it was intended for, is the Design both of *Moral* and *Christian* Philosophy. Wise Men in all Ages, have done something towards it. Some of the *Heathen Moralists*, by the very strength of Natural Reason, have shewn the Inhumanity and Unlawfulness of private Revenge, and drawn Arguments against it, from the great Mischiefs and Inconveniences, it brings upon Men, both in their private and public Capacities.

If it be urg'd that *They* had unsettl'd Notions in this matter; that the same Authors sometimes contradicted themselves; *Now* recommending Revenge, as Brave and Manly, and *Then* dissuading from it, as Brutish and Irrational.—— It may be observ'd, that, as *Revenge*, in a limited Sense, is taken for a Virtue, and without bounds, for a Lawless Violence, (which, undoubtedly, is a Vice) so those Philosophers, in allowing of it, refer to the *Former*; and in prohibiting of it, to the *Latter*.

But, if the Voice of Nature *did* really contradict itself, *That* of Revelation has no Divisions, but speaks
and

and repeats, *the same Thing*. Both the Law, and the Gospel prohibit the Retaliation of Injuries, and require Mutual Forbearance and Forgiveness.

'Tis true; the *Jews* were allow'd to require *Breach for Breach, Eye for Eye, and Tooth for Tooth*, Lev. xxiv. 20. Not that the injur'd Party was to be an Arbitrator in his own Case: He was to proceed in a *Judicial* Way, and his Cause to be heard and determin'd by the *Judges*, who were to make diligent *Inquisition*, (Deut. xix. 18.) and, without partial Fondness, or blind *Pity*, to proceed against the Offender, and Execute the Law of Retaliation upon him, v. 21. So that, this Law, tho' perverted, and mis-appli'd, by the *Jews*, was never intended, in its first Institution, to promote, or encourage, private Revenge.

Nay, even that Law, which permitted the *Revenge of Blood* to pursue, and kill the Person, who had the Misfortune of Slaying his Neighbour by meer chance, (provided the Pursuer over-took him, before he reach'd any *City of Refuge*) was never intended to be an universal Rule to all the World besides: It was only a *Temporary Indulgence*, suited to the particular Temper and Condition of that People; and, as the Learned *Grotius* observes, *Majoris Mali vitandi causâ, for the prevention of greater Mischiefs among them*. The ancient, moral, Law was—*Thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thy Heart. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any Grudge against the Children of thy People; but thou shalt love thy Neighbour, as thyself*, Levit. xix. 17. And, lest that perverse People should have Misunderstood their *Prophet*, and persuaded themselves, that he only spake the Language of his own meek Temper, 'tis added—I am the Lord; I the supreme Lord and Judge of the World have spoken it."

And, in another Place, God claims the Execution of Vengeance, and the Distribution of Rewards,

as

as *His* Prerogative and Office. So, (Deut. xxxii. 35.) *To me belongeth Vengeance and Recompence.* To which Passages St. Paul seems to refer in these Words, when, with an affectionate Compellation, He dissuades from the Business of Personal Revenge, and would have us wait Gods leisure for Reparation, whose Prerogative it is, either by his own immediate Providence, or by his Vicegerents, Authoriz'd by himself, to inflict Punishment upon the Wrong-doer. *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, &c.*

This, to *them*, who are *hasty of Spirit*, is a shreud Denial. The Prospect of Justice, at such a tedious distance, yields no Satisfaction. Besides, "to be altogether Passive in the mean while (they think) is
" Base and Dishonourable; an Argument of a base
" and timorous Mind; an effectual Way to expose
" them to the Scorn of Friends, and an encouragement
" to Enemies to requite such Tameness with
" fresh Affronts. And *Lastly*, they are apt to fancy,
" that so long as they abstain from the sweet Plea-
" sure of *returning Evil for Evil*, they deprive them-
" selves of the common benefit of distributive Ju-
" stice; of which (according to these *Mens Ethicks*)
" every private Person may be the Administrator." I shall endeavour therefore, after I have

I. Stated the Notion of Revenge.

II. To consider the unreasonableness of it, as it is inflicted by private Hands; notwithstanding these Specious, and Popular Pretences. And then

III. To shew the unlawfulness of it, as it is an Invasion of Gods Authority, and an Usurpation of the Magistrates Office. But,

IV. Since

IV. Since it cannot be suppos'd that the Gospel obliges us to be entirely Passive, under all sorts of Insults, Abuses, or Oppressions ; it will be requisite to shew, in what Cases, and in what Manner, the injur'd Person may endeavour to obtain Reparation, without being concern'd in the *Sin* of Revenge.

1. The Word *Revenge* (as has been intimated already) may be taken in an *Ambiguous* Sense. If we consider it, barely, as an Affection of the Mind, we are not to look upon it, as in itself evil, because, no doubt, it was implanted *there*, as all other Passions are, by our Wise Creator, for Noble and Useful Purposes. And, as *Anger* naturally excites us to Guard ourselves against an approaching evil, so *Revenge*, as naturally gives us a desire of obtaining Satisfaction for some evil, actually come, or at the least conceiv'd to be come, upon us. The first Motions of both seem to be necessary and unavoidable, and are not to be prevented by the Authority of the Will. But then, they *may*, and *ought* to be regulated, in their Sallies, by a superiour Principle ; and due Care should be taken that they Aim no further than at the great end of our Being, *viz.* Self-preservation. And indeed, when *that* cannot be secur'd, but by Acts of Violence, and doing Mischief to others (provided these Acts be guided by the Rules of Justice, and, where is room for it, by Mercy) so far those Passions may be presum'd to be good and innocent : But, when they *unnecessarily* pass these bounds, they commence unreasonable and vicious.

Thus, with regard to the former Case, tho' a Good Man will prevail with himself to take no Notice of *some* Injuries ; yet, in extreme Danger, he may warrantably repel Force by Force ; and, if

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he has no other Way of escaping, save himself, even by the Ruin and Destruction of his Enemy. With reference to the latter, when a Man *breaths out Threatnings and Slaughter*, without necessity; when he is so far from endeavouring to Curb, and Restrain his Fury, that he rather throws up the Reins, and spurs it forward, and forces the *Beast* to run away with the *Man*; Further, when he has chas'd, and driven his Enemy beyond all possibility of doing more Mischief; yet, not content with his own Security, pushes on still, and vows his Destruction.——Here, he no longer Acts upon the Principle of Self-defence, but upon that of deep Malice and Barbarity. So that, as Self-preservation never causes Pain or Disturbance to others, but in Cases of undoubted necessity; *Revenge*, taken in an ill Sense, and according to the usual Acceptation of the Word *renders evil for evil*, purely to satiate its own Hungry Malice, studys and contrives Mischief not for the natural end of Punishment, but upon the abstracted view of alleviating its own Grief, in the contemplation of others Sufferings.

Frankly to acknowledge so much, would raise Horror and Abhorrence in all sober Minds. Arts therefore are us'd to set it off with Address: False Colours laid on to disguise its Rancor. And,

2. As in the greatest Madness, there may be some small Resemblance of Reason; so in the prosecution of *Revenge*, there are not wanting Pretensions to some of the most Heroic and Commendable Virtues. Thus,

1. A nice Resentment, even, of the least Indignity, argues, with some, a brave and generous Mind: and, to let it pass unreveng'd, is inconsistent with the *Modern* notion of *Honour*. Now

(1.) It must be confess'd indeed, that, since God has implanted, in humane Nature, a love of *Honour*,
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for great and noble Ends, it is almost as natural for Man to desire *Honour*, as *Immortality*. But then, it must be granted withall, that, as Men differ in their Notions of this desired Object, so they take as different Ways to attain it. The Wiser proceed upon the Principles of true Virtue and Honesty. The Giddy and Injudicious are carried away upon the Wings of popular Fame, and think to derive *Their Glory* from such Actions, as are really a *Shame*, and a Reproach to humane Nature.

(2.) To settle this Point then, it must be remembered, that, as God is the Original, so likewise the Pattern of *Honour*. He therefore that comes up nearest in his Resemblance of God, has the fairest pretension to Honour. He is such an one, as God has declar'd worthy of *Honour* from Himself (1 Sam. ii. 30.) and therefore one, that deserves to be highly esteem'd of Men.

Such, more especially, is he, who, in conformity to the Divine Patience, *suffers long, and is Kind*; who, not only abstains from Revenge, but requites ill turns with Acts of Beneficence. In this, he imitates his *Heavenly Father*, who *causes his Sun to shine, and his Rain to fall, on them, that provoke him every Day*. He resembles him in his most beloved Attribute, *that*, which God himself seems to be best pleas'd with; and *that*, for the sake of which, we are most strongly induc'd to Reverence, and Adore God. A Man then of such an *Excellent Spirit* has Merit enough to recommend him to our Esteem. Nay, as he is *in favour with God*, he may Challenge a *double* portion of *Honour* from *Men*.

(3.) What a Wild, what a Phantastic Notion then have they of *Honour*, who place it upon the point of the Sword; who think, that it consists in a quick resentment, and in knowing the precise Time, when 'tis fit to *rise*, and commit Murder?

If *this* be taken for the Standard of Bravery, it is such, as is professedly set up, and allow'd of, by no other *Kingdom*, but that of *Darkness*. From thence it took its Authority, and thither the Laws both of God, and Good Men send it again. For he, that commits Murder (altho' to repair his suppos'd Honour, yet, if he has Justice done him) is treated by every Wise Government, with all the marks of Infamy; and is turn'd out of *this* World, perhaps, into a *Worse*; where he is to reap the Fruit of his Wickedness, in everlasting Contempt and Misery.

Wherefore, if Revenge, as it terminates in Slaughter, be out-law'd, by God and Man, then, I hope, its pretensions to *Honour* may very fairly be laid aside; and the Wise-Man's Maxim stand as an everlasting Truth, viz. *It is the Glory of a Man to pass over a Transgression*, Prov. xix.—11.

2. And, as idle a Notion have they of *Courage*, who found the practice of Revenge upon it. True *Courage*, as well as other Virtues, must be under the Conduct of *Prudence*. *This* fortifies the Mind with such a steady Resolution, as it is not to be shaken with every Assault. It raises the Man above unnecessary Resentments, and keeps him from being easily Provok'd. Besides, be the Affront what it will, he that is govern'd by Reason, is not transported beyond a Sense of his Danger, nor engages in an Enterprize, that is inconsistent with Religion and Conscience.

How then can he be call'd a Man of Courage, who is disturb'd at every Trifle; who starts at the least appearance of Danger, and lets his Happiness depend upon the uncertain Temper and Behaviour of others; who falls on his Enemy, without one sober Thought, and either drives Headlong upon his own Destruction, or does that in a blind Rage, which may, or, at least, ought to trouble his Conscience, ever after?

Certainly,

Certainly, Pevishness and Precipitancy are so far from being an Argument of a great and Heroic Mind, that they are an Indication of a Weak and Effeminate Soul. And he, that is driven away by his Passions, and engages boldly in an ill Action, has just as much Bravery, as there is in a Whirlwind. In short, Noise and Distraction make up his Character; And his pretensions to *Courage*, as well as to *Honour*, may reasonably be thrown up.

3. Nor is there any Credit to be given to the next Plea, *viz.* That a forgiving Temper draws the Contempt of Friends, and invites further Abuses from Enemies. For, let two Things be consider'd,

(1.) That upon whatever ground Friendship is founded, it is never to be supported, but by a mutual observance of strict Virtue and Honesty. Good Nature indeed will work off all unreasonable Obstinacy, and incline a Man to conform with the innocent Humour of his Friend. But, all this while, Religion, and true Honour, will take care, that the *One* does not desire, nor the *Other* comply with, what is Unlawful and Wicked. He therefore, that derides his Friend, for acting more agreeably to the Dictates of his own Conscience, than to the Rules of false Honour, gives Cause enough for dissolving the Correspondence. Nay, in the very Fact, he ceases to be a Friend, and deserves to be renounc'd for the Affront. And,

(2.) So far from inviting more Injuries, is such a meek, and gentle Behaviour, that it is *the shortest way* to *assuage the Malice*, and give a check to the mischievous Designs of ill Men.

If you stand aside, and *give place unto Wrath*, you not only avoid its Force, but let your Enemy perceive, He has no one to contend with. You remove, from him, the Occasions of Anger, and leave him to quarrel with Himself, or, if he please, with his own Shadow. At length, in *the cool of the Day*; when the
Clouds

Clouds are blown over, and his Passions allay'd, he might begin to have a clearer Prospect of Things, and a better Understanding of himself. What, in the *Storm*, *swell'd*, and lookt like Honour, Courage, or Equity; Now, in the *Calm*, appears to be Distraction, Impotence, or Cruelty. In short, the Man has leisure enough to reflect upon his Folly, and as good Cause to Repent, that He has *disquieted himself in vain*. But further,—

When, to your Forbearance, you add the more Heavenly Virtue of *doing Good for Evil*; when you not only abstain from Acts of Hostility, but study all Opportunities, and endeavour, by the utmost Kindness, and Civility, to oblige him—This, one would think, should not fail of working upon his Ingenuity, and striking his Heart with a deep Remorse. *You heap Coals of Fire on his Head*, which melt down his hard and stubborn Temper, into Tenderness and Love, *Purge off his Sour Humour, like Dross*, and refine the *Brute* into a *Man*, perhaps a Friend, at least a Sociable Creature. For, we may presume, there are but Few, so very *Unreasonable* and *Wicked*, as to load a Man with fresh Injuries, only for taking no notice of the last: And Fewer yet, so Inhumane, as to requite Love and good Nature, with Hatred and Revenge.

If therefore a *meek and quiet Spirit* be, in its Nature, so apt to extinguish Enmity; If the Divine Grace, repaying Injuries with Kindness, be so powerful, as to charm the most implacable Spirit, and to conquer even Malice itself—Then a fiery Resentment, and a spiteful Retaliation of Injuries, must work the contrary Effects. Like *Coals to burning Coals, and Wood to Fire* (Prov. xxvi. 21.) They can serve only to enflame Men's Minds, to immortalize Quarrels, and destroy the Peace of Societies. And thus it is in fact.—One ill Turn makes way for a greater: A *sharp Tongue cuts off the Sacred Bonds of Charity*,

rity, and opens a *Passage* for all manner of Barbarity. A small Provocation is repay'd with a real Injury; and this again is repell'd with Fury and Out-rage. And unless one of the contending Parties has more Wisdom, than the other, the Strife will be spun out Commensurate to the Thread of Life; and nothing but *Death* will shut up the distracted *Scene*, and conclude the *Tragedy*.

Wherefore, the Expedient of revenging *one* Injury, in order to prevent *another*, is Absurd. The contrary Deportment is generally more Successful, being better fitted for that End, and seldom disappointed of its Aim. Once more,

4. Revenge is often recommended under the specious Pretence of *Justice*.

To say, That Justice must be observ'd, and the Injurious punish'd (otherwise, good Men would be continually expos'd to Violence) are very popular Positions; such, as will be sure to meet with an Extempore Approbation. But then,

If every one were to judge for Him-self, and redress his own Grievances, there would be but little Justice, and less Mercy. Pride, Ill Nature, and Covetousness, are strange Qualities; apt to be Fond of themselves, and Cruel to their opposite Virtues. Where Prejudice holds the Ballance, it must be with an uneven Hand: There Mallice and Hatred are too ponderous for Truth and Honesty; and as for Innocence—that must weigh *lighter than Vanity* itself. The Case, in short, is, most People are apt to have a good Opinion of Themselves, and an indifferent one of their Neighbours. They have a quick and full view of their own *slender* Merits, but can hardly discern the *flaming* Perfections of others. Such a selfish Temper makes no allowance, for meer Accidents and Errors; but aggravates a small Fault into the highest Crime. Hence, the greatest Punishment will scarce make

make an Atonement. The Wild Fire flames out in Rage and Fury, and is unquenchable by any thing, perhaps, but the Blood of the Offender.

Besides, as private Persons are unfit to be intrusted with, so, by an exprefs Prohibition, they are precluded from, such Power: The Divine Wisdom having reserv'd, to *Itself*, the Administration of Justice. *Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.*

III. As God is the Creator, so likewise the Supreme Judge, of the World. Accordingly, He does oftentimes, in a perceptible manner, interpose in Human Affairs; Rewarding good Men with Acts of Favour and Goodness; and making bad Men the visible Monuments of His Wrath and Vengeance.

But *ordinarily*, Justice is Administred by the Magistrate. For, as God is the Original of all Power and Dominion; so part of These He has communicated to Kings and Princes, who are the chief Instruments of His Providence: And to other Persons, as, in His Wisdom, He sees fit, for the due Regulation, and good Order of the World. Hence therefore, Rulers and Judges are, in Scripture, Honoured with the Title of *Gods*, and said to be *Children of the most High* (*Psal.* 82. 6.) God has Invested them with part of his own Prerogative, and given them a Power to distribute Rewards, and inflict Punishments, even *Death* itself, where the *Crime* is adjudg'd to be *Capital*. Hence again it is said, (*Prov.* viii. 15, 16.) *By Me Kings Reign and Princes decree Justice. By me Princes Rule, and Nobles, even all the Judges of the Earth.* And again we are told, that the Magistrate is *Gods Minister*, sent by Him, for the Punishment of evil-doers, and for the Praise of them that do well, (*1 Pet.* ii. 14.) And that He beareth not the Sword in vain, but is an avenger, appointed by God, to execute Wrath on him, that doth Evil, *Rom.* xiii. 4.

Not that any one, invested with this Power, has reason to think, that, by Virtue thereof, he may discharge his Office in a Rage play the Tyrant at every turn, and inflict Punishment with Insolence. Such a behaviour, as it proceeds from an unbenevolent Temper, is surely attended with Discredit. For (not to mention the Unlawfulness of it) it Sullies the *Robe* of Honour, casts a dimness upon the *Diadem*, and *sinks the Magistrate* into a *meer Manager*, and plainly declares, that he is *doing Justice with a Vengeance*.

Wherefore, duly considering *Whose Minister he is*, he resembles *God, and not Man*. Free from all selfish and narrow Views, he patiently hears, and *searches out the Cause, that he knew not*. And as he gives his Determination, without respect of Persons, or Interest; so he passes Sentence, without Anger, or Hatred; and cannot Condemn, even, the greatest Criminal, but with Pity and Compassion.

But to proceed; Since there are some Crimes, which, for want of Evidence, cannot but escape the Magistrates Animadversion; and, for good Reasons, best known to the Wisdom of God, pass off, without any apparent Marks of *His Displeasure*——We may conclude therefore, that such are reserv'd for a future Judgment, when they will be fully discover'd to a whole World of Men and Angels, to the everlasting Reproach and Confusion of the guilty Wretches, concern'd in them.

And now, if any private Man shall presume to go contrary to these settl'd Methods, intermeddle in the great Business of Revenge, and require such Satisfaction, as his own Passion shall suggest——He do's certainly assume a Power, that do's not belong to him, encroach upon God's Prerogative, and jostle *the most High* out of his Judgment-Seat: An Insolence, which somewhat resembles *That* of the fall'n Angels; and, if unrepented of, will draw after it Their Punishment

ishment too. For God has solemnly declar'd, that He is *very Jealous for his Holy Name*, and his Honour (Ezek. xxix.—25.) And we have his Veracity for it, that *he will not give his Glory to another*, Isa. 42. 8.

Again, as the Revengeful Person becomes injurious to the Majesty of God, so likewise to the Authority of the Magistrate. He commits an Outrage upon the Laws, by which Government is supported; and, by his rash, or unskilful Management of the Sword, cuts off the Sinews, and Ligaments, by which Society is held together.

So impious, and intolerable a Practice is Personal Revenge.

IV. If therefore Justice *must* be done, and *Necessity* requires Reparation; the Procedure is to be Manag'd in such a Method, as God himself has appointed. That is, either,

1. In a Judicial Way, Or
2. By a dependance upon his Providence.

1. In case of considerable Violence offer'd, or intolerable Wrong done us, we may appeal to the Magistrate, for Security against the *former*, and Satisfaction for the *latter*.

Were there no Laws, to fix and determine Mens Rights, no One would have any thing, which he might justly call, and enjoy, as his own. And, were there no Authority, to Administer Justice, to Vindicate the Oppress'd, and *Punish the Wrong-doer*—The World would soon be over-run with Violence and Rapine. There would be no such thing as Property, but what is guarded by an irresistible Power. One Man indeed might Sow, but *Another* would Reap. One might plant Vineyards, and take the Pleasure, as well as the Pains, of *Dressing them*: But a stronger, than Himself, would lay Claim to the Fruits, and *gather the Grapes thereof*. So again,

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Had not the Laws taken care to *bridle* Mens *Mouths*, and to tie up their Tongues, from Defamation and Bitterness; the most *unspotted* Innocence would be *Sullied* by the *blackest* Calumnies, and the *fairest* Reputation be *deflower'd* by the *Wanton* Cruelty of the *Slanderer*. Nor would the most Sacred Office, the Highest Eminency, or the most Prudent Deportment, be a Protection against Those *bitter Words*, which, like *sharp Arrows*, are shot from *Envenom'd* Tongues.

But, since *the Law is made*, both for Restraining and Punishing *the Lawless and Disobedient*; both Nature and Reason direct a Man to be upon his Guard. Prudence awakens his Vigilance, and prompts him to use such Methods, as Religion allows, for his Preservation: And, in case of Mischief, or Damage, Actually done him, he is not only permitted, but, perhaps, bound, to do himself right, by legal Process. Thus,

By rescuing his Property out of the Hands of the Oppressor, he is the better enabled to *provide for his own*, and to relieve the Wants of others. And, by Vindicating his Good Name, from False, or Foul Aspersions, he *might* promote the Honour of Religion, and will be *sure* to carry on his secular Affairs, both with Credit and Success. Besides,

Charity itself (tho', for the most part, strongly inclin'd to forgive, yet) sometimes requires, that an Act of Justice be Executed upon an Offender; that, reflecting upon the Unsuccessfulness of his Villainy, he may be brought to Shame and Repentance: At least, Others, ready to engage in an ill thing, may take warning by *His* Example, and, by his Punishment, be deterr'd from committing the like Offence.

But then, it should be remember'd, that, even a legal Vindication of injuries might degenerate into the Sin of *Revenge*. As when Men fly to Justice, upon a-

ny flight Occasion, or when they prosecute an evil-doer, purely out of Vexation and Malice.

(1.) When they trouble the Magistrate for every frivolous Trespafs, or Offence. The Weak, the Timorous, and the Proud, are remarkable for this unhappy Temper. They are very jealous of their Rights, and ready to expostulate about the least, even a *suppos'd* Wrong. They *Dream* of Injuries, and Affronts, when no such thing is so much as intended. They rigidly insist upon every Nicety, and defend the least Trifle, with the tenderest Concern, and the greatest Obstinacy, imaginable. They can bear with nothing, but are *Fierce and hasty of Spirit*. They will remit nothing, but require the utmost Satisfaction, their Fury shall Suggest, or the Law will allow. Hence it comes to pass, that the Court is fill'd with so many needless Suits ; and, that the Magistrate is wearied with such *Small matters*, as are scarce worthy the Notice of a *private Man*. Again,

(2.) They, more especially, are to be charg'd with the Sin of Revenge, who go to Law out of Vexation and Malice : Not so much to do themselves Justice, as to discharge the Rancor of an envenom'd Soul : Not altogether to preserve Order in the Publick, but chiefly to put *them* to Charges, whom they Malign and Hate. Hence it is, that Suits are designedly drawn out into at unreasonable length ; that the honest Man's Patience is tir'd, his Purse emptied, and his Cause lost, perhaps, not so much for want of Merit to recommend, as of Money to defend it.

This is a *Sore*, but a common *Evil among Men*. Now, however the *Law* may seem to favour such *unrighteous Dealing*, such over-bearing Wickedness ; the *Gospel* looks upon it, as (it really is) a Manifest Act of injustice ; not only Oppression, but down right Theft and Robbery.

As therefore, nothing but absolute Necessity, or unquestionable Charity, will justify an Appeal to the Magistrate ; so, whoever is forc'd to call in his Assistance, should remember, that *all Spite, Bitterness, Wrath, Anger, with all Malice be put away* ; and such a Temper and Deportment kept up, as may fairly evince, that he has no other End in view, but the Honour of Justice, his own Defence, the pulick Good, or the Chastisement of the Offender, with whom gentler Methods would not prevail.

To all which, I might add, that, when he has his Adversary at an Advantage, he ought to treat him with Humanity : Not exact the utmost, but be content (if it lye in his Choice) to accept of less Reparation, than strict Justice would allow ; in conformity to the great Pattern of Patience and Goodness, Who is *not extreme to Mark what is done amiss, but, in the midst of Judgment, remembers Mercy.*

But then, it must be confess'd, that the Laws, tho' contriv'd with the utmost Prudence and Caution, and adapted to the general Good of Society, yet may not reach some particular Cases. So far from it, that while they Consult the publick Welfare, they may tend to the casual Detriment of a few Innocent Persons. Besides,

The Magistrate, though he personates *the Judge of all the Earth*, yet do's not partake of His *Omniscience*. Whatever His Abilities are, He receives information from other Men's Senses ; and is determin'd by their Testimony ; which, tho' not always *doubted*, may yet sometimes be *false*. If so—then the most Righteous Judge is not, in all Cases, secur'd against the danger of *judging unrighteous Judgment*. And thus it may come to pass (tho' it is to be hop'd it seldom do's so) that the Stream of Justice is turn'd, in Matters, both *Judicial*, and *Criminal* : That Right is Oppress'd, and Innocence Condemn'd ; while Falshood gets into Credit, and Guilt is not only discharg'd, but comes off with Applause. Now,

Now, whoever has the hard Lot to suffer in such a Case (if he has no further Appeal upon Earth) must be content with the present Determination, and submit to the Sentence, without Reviling the Magistrate, or Reflecting upon the Laws.

2. He may rightly infer, that the Supreme Governour of the World will certainly make Amends for these Deficiencies, by his full and unerring Judgment. That, as His Knowledge is Universal, so is His Justice Inflexible: That therefore, He is fully Qualified to do *Right to All*. That, however Things are carried on, with a seeming Inequality, *Here*; they shall be adjusted at a *future Tribunal*; *Where* God will give an Everlasting Reward to the Righteous, and render Eternal Vengeance to His Adversaries.

He may comfort himself with this Consideration, That Men's Judgment is not the final Issue, by which he is to Stand, or Fall. That, as there is a Higher Court, *Whither* his Tryal is adjourn'd, and *Where*, his Cause shall have another Hearing; so *There*, can be no such thing, as Collusion, or Falshood: Every Disguise will be pull'd off, and all Things appear in their proper Colours: Not one Evasiou be left to the closest Hypocrisy, nor the least Reward be detain'd from the most obscure Innocence. That oppress'd Virtue shall be *brought forth, as the Light*, and be made apparent, *as the Noon-day*: And, that the most successful Villainy shall be expos'd to the Scorn of that great Assembly; and every triumphant Wickedness be sent to everlasting Confusion.

With such Thoughts, the injur'd, good Man supports his Mind, amidst the greatest Hardships.

Not that his Satisfaction results *meerly* from the contemplation of Vengeance to be inflicted upon his Enemies. Nay, he cannot, with Complacency, view the Miseries, which sometimes befall them, even in this Life, any further, than as they tend to stop the Progress of their Violence, and to prevent their in-

sup-

supportable Punishment in another World. Much less then can he take delight in the Prospect of their eternal Ruin (That were inhumane and devilish) the very Apprehensions of which, must strike his Soul with Horror, and send him to *the Throne of Grace*, with Prayers in their behalf, that God would give them Repentance, and avert those Judgments, which otherwise, *by their Impenitence and Stubborness, they treasure up to themselves, against the Day of Wrath.*

All his Comfort arises from this Consideration; That God will *take the Matter into his own Hand*; by his infallible Judgment, supply the Defects of Human Laws; *Help them to Right, that have suffer'd Wrong*; and reward their patient Sufferings with an *infinite and eternal weight of Glory.*

How excellent then is that Counsel of the Wise Man (*Prov. xx. 22. Say not thou, I will recompence Evil: but wait on the Lord, and He shall save thee.*)

On the other hand, let the prosperous Oppressor sometimes entertain *his* Mind with the same Thoughts: That, tho' perhaps he *may* pass through *this* World, with Reputation, and Success; *the God of Vengeance* will assuredly meet with him in the *next*, and, in due manner, recompense the Guilt, and Demerit of every injurious Act. And,

If any one be so Blind and Daring, as to wade thro' a *Sea of Blood*, and to *make Shipwrack of Conscience*, for the Vindication of his *suppos'd Honour*, let him consider, that He takes abundance of Pains to lose the Solid, Eternal, Glories of God, for the empty Praises of a few, vain Men; Praises, which live but a moment in the Air, and expire in their own Sound. And let him also expect, that tho' the Laws of Men may be persuaded to *comply* with his *Quality*, and their Courts to *respect* him, as a *Gentleman*; yet, at the last Tribunal, which knows no other, but strict and impartial Justice, He will be rang'd among the most *infamous* Sinners, and be treated as a *Murderer*.

In

In short, let every Injurious, and Blood-thirsty Wretch, and indeed, all the proud Sons of Violence, consider, that, while they meditate Revenge, and would be glad to carry their spiteful Power with them, beyond the Grave, their *Life*, in the mean time, *vanishes like a Vapour*, and Death, like an *Armed Man*, advances, every moment, towards them. That, as soon as the fatal Blow is struck, they drop into Silence, and *cease from Troubling*, *Job. iii. 17.*

But then, let them consider withal, that *they must rise again to Judgment*. That their malicious Disposition (at least the Guilt of it) will inseparably attend their better part, and force them down to the miserable Society of Evil Spirits, whom they so nearly resemble, already, in their unhappy Temper.

Wherefore, how admirable, how important is that Advice *Eccles. xxviii. 6, 7.*) *Remember thy End, and let Enmity cease. Remember Corruption, and Death; and abide in the Commandments. Remember the Commandments, and bear no Malice to thy Neighbour.*

And may the Grace of God so far prevail over our sinful Passions, that, *Putting away from us, all Bitterness, Wrath, Anger, Clamour, and Evil-speaking, with all Malice, We may be Kind one to another, Tender-hearted, Forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us.*



F I N I S.

ADVERTISEMENT.

A Sermon Preach'd at the Assizes held at Taunton March the 25th 1712; Before Mr. Baron Bury and Mr. Justice Eyre. By John Potter, M. A. Vicar of Cloford in Somersetshire. Publish'd at the Request of the High-Sheriff, and the Gentlemen of the Grand Jury.

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